

The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC No. 03747-85
25 July 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: George Kolt
National Intelligence Officer for Europe

SUBJECT: Your Meeting With Ambassador William Luers (Prague)

1. The primary purpose of this meeting is to allow you to hear and probe the views of one of our more active ambassadors in Eastern Europe. Bill Luers has been our Ambassador to Prague since December 1983. Embassy reporting under him has been comprehensive, imaginative and quick off the mark. For instance, Prague was the first post to report on East European views about the important Vladimirov article in Pravda (attachment 1). Luers has been particularly interested in using Prague as a window onto Soviet politics and policies. You may wish to raise with him the following substantive areas:

- The current Soviet leadership and its policies as seen from Prague.
- Relations between Czechs and Slovaks and possible exploitation of that division by the Soviet Union.
- Is the Husak-led "normalization" era drawing to an end?

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George Kolt

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MEMO FOR: DCI
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FROM: NIO/EUROPE

SUBJECT: Your Meeting with Ambassador William Luers (Prague)

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EZ1:

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 02 PRAGUE 03372

EZ2:

STOCKHOLM FOR USDEL CDE

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PREL, UR, CZ

<> SUBJECT: PRAGUE WATCHES <><>GORBACHEV<><> -- WITH SOME MISGIVINGS

REF: A) MOSCOW 8423, B) PRAGUE 3012

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

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2. SUMMARY: THE "VLADIMIROV" ARTICLE FROM PRAVDA PUBLISHED IN RUDE PRAVO JUNE 22 HAS RAISED CONCERN
- <> AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN HOPING THAT <><>GORBACHEV<><> WILL PUSH FOR ECONOMIC REFORMS IN PRAGUE AS WELL AS IN MOSCOW. MEANWHILE, DISSIDENTS REPORT THAT
 - <> <><>HUSAK<><>'S RECENT TRIP TO MOSCOW WAS NOT AS SMOOTH SAILING AS PRESS COVERAGE HAD SUGGESTED.
- END SUMMARY.

3. JUNE 22 RUDE PRAVO AND BRATISLAVA PRAVDA BOTH PUBLISHED THE VLADIMIROV ARTICLE ANALYZED IN REF A (WITHOUT, HOWEVER, MENTIONING THE FICTIOUS AUTHOR). SINCE ITS APPEARANCE, THE ARTICLE HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF INTENSE DISCUSSION AMONG POLITICAL OBSERVERS AND DIPLOMATS HERE.

- THE DIPLOMATS: DURING JUNE 27 BOATRIDE FOR AMBASSADORS, FOREIGN MINISTER CHNOUPEK AGREED WITH AMBASSADORS PRIVATELY THAT THE ARTICLE CLEARLY APPLIES TO EASTERN EUROPE, BUT ARGUED THAT IT WAS
- <> NOT DIRECTED AGAINST <><>CZECHOSLOVAKIA<><>. ASKED WHETHER IT WAS DIRECTED AGAINST HUNGARY, HE MERELY LAUGHED AND ANSWERED: "YOU SAID THAT, I DIDN'T." GDR AMBASSADOR ZIEBART (PROTECT) BELITTLED THE ARTICLE'S SIGNIFICANCE DURING A SEPARATE CONVERSATION WITH THE AMBASSADOR, CALLING IT "AN ECHO FROM THE DISTANT PAST" AND ADDING THAT THE GDR PAYS LESS ATTENTION TO ARTICLES IN PRAVDA AND LISTENS MOSTLY TO WHAT
 - <> THE LEADERSHIP SAYS. HE NOTED THAT <><>GORBACHEV<><> CONTINUES TO CALL FOR IMPROVED MANAGEMENT AND INNOVATION IN THE ECONOMY AND OPINED THAT THE ARTICLE MAY REFLECT INTERNAL OPPOSITION TO ECONOMIC REFORM INSIDE THE SOVIET UNION.

-- THE LIBERALS: A "LIBERAL" PARTY MEMBER HERE WAS MUCH LESS SANGUINE THAN ZIEBART, LABELLING THE ARTICLE "VERY DISTURBING" AND "A CONTRADICTION OF EVERYTHING WE HAVE BEEN HEARING FROM MOSCOW." OUR SOURCE WAS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED THAT THE ARTICLE MIGHT BE INTERPRETED IN PRAGUE AS AN ATTACK AGAINST PRIME MINISTER STROUGAL AND OTHER WOULD-BE ECONOMIC REFORMERS.

- THE DISSIDENTS: A CHARTER 77 SIGNATORY WHO FOLLOWS POLITICAL EVENTS HERE CLOSELY HAD A SIMILAR APPRAISAL. TO HIM THE VLADIMIROV ARTICLE WAS ONE OF THE HARSHTEST OF ITS KIND SINCE THE 1950'S AND WAS CLEARLY INTENDED
- <> TO PUT EASTERN EUROPEANS ON NOTICE THAT <><>GORBACHEV<><>'S "REFORMS" WILL BE AN INTERNAL SOVIET AFFAIR AND WILL NOT EXTEND TO INTER-BLOC RELATIONS. HE ADDED THAT
 - <> <><>GORBACHEV<><> WAS ANXIOUS TO AVOID A REPETITION OF THE EXPERIENCE OF 1956, WHEN BLOC LEADERS INTERPRETED

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KHRUSHCHEV'S REFORMISM AS A LICENSE TO LAUNCH ON
INDEPENDENT PATHS OF THEIR OWN. IN HIS VIEW,

<> <><>CZECHOSLOVAKIA<><>'S PROBLEMS ARE VERY LOW ON <><>GORBACHEV<><>'S
<> LIST OF PRIORITIES AT PRESENT, AND <><>GORBACHEV<><> JUST
<> WANTS QUIET IN <><>CZECHOSLOVAKIA<><> (AND THE REST OF
EASTERN EUROPE), SO THAT HE CAN CONCENTRATE ON
<> SOVIET PROBLEMS. THUS, <><>GORBACHEV<><> WILL OPT FOR
<> CONTINUED STAGNATION UNDER <><>HUSAK<><>, RATHER THAN
PRODDING THE CZECHOSLOVAK LEADERSHIP TO GET THE COUNTRY
MOVING AGAIN.

<> 4. DESPITE THIS ENCOURAGING OUTLOOK FOR <><>HUSAK<><>, OUR
<> CHARTER SOURCE REPORTED THAT <><>HUSAK<><>'S LATE MAY VISIT
TO MOSCOW HAD ITS SHARE OF UNPLEASANT MOMENTS.
ON HIS RETURN HE REPORTEDLY TOLD HIS COLLEAGUES

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CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 02 OF 02 PRAGUE 03372

EZ2:

STOCKHOLM FOR USDEL CDE

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

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- <> SUBJECT: PRAGUE WATCHES <><>GORBACHEV<><> -- WITH SOME MISGIVINGS
 <> HERE THAT <><>CZECHOSLOVAKIA<><> WAS IN THE BEST POSITION
 AMONG THE WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES AND WAS THE MOST
 TRUSTED IN MOSCOW. BUT HE ALSO REPORTED THAT

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- <> <><>GORBACHEV<><> HAD BEEN VERY COMBATIVE DURING THEIR MEETING, COMPLAINING THAT THE STANDARD OF SOVIET WORKERS IS LOWER THAN IN ANY EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRY, AND EMPHASIZING THAT THIS SITUATION ^{could} NOT CONTINUE. <><>GORBACHEV<><> REPORTEDLY ALSO SPOKE HARSHLY ABOUT THE PREVALENCE OF RUSSOPHOBIA AMONG THE CZECHOSLOVAK POPULATION AND THE INADEQUACY OF GOC MEASURES TO COMBAT IT. HE COMPLAINED, FOR INSTANCE, THAT TOO FEW RUSSIAN BOOKS ARE TRANSLATED INTO CZECH OR SLOVAK, AND THEY ARE PUBLISHED IN TOO SMALL EDITIONS. HE ALSO COMPLAINED THAT THE ATTENDANCE AT A RECENT CONCERT BY A SOVIET ORCHESTRA IN PRAGUE HAD BEEN SO LOW THAT THE MUSICIANS OUTNUMBERED THE AUDIENCE. HE WAS MOST BITTER ABOUT LAST WINTER'S ICE HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIPS IN PRAGUE, WHERE, HE SAID, THE SOVIET PLAYERS HAD BEEN MADE TO FEEL AS IF THEY WERE PLAYING ON ENEMY TERRITORY (SEE PRAGUE 2462 AND PRAGUE 3099).
- <> ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCE, <><>HUSAK<><> TRIED TO EXPLAIN THAT THE AUTHORITIES HAD TAKEN SPECIAL MEASURES TO RESTRICT THE AUDIENCE FOR THE MATCH, BUT
- <> <><>GORBACHEV<><> INTERRUPTED HIM TO SAY THAT THIS MADE IT EVEN WORSE.
-
- <> 5. COMMENT: THE <><>HUSAK<><> LEADERSHIP IS IN A PARADOXICAL SITUATION WITH <><>GORBACHEV<><>. IT IS THE MOST DEPENDABLE, ORTHODOX AND STABLE LEADERSHIP THE SOVIETS HAVE IN EASTERN EUROPE. YET IT IS PROBABLY IN STYLE, ENERGY AND EVEN POPULAR IMAGE, THE LEAST COMPATIBLE WITH <><>GORBACHEV<><>. <><>HUSAK<><>, HIS SUPPORTERS AND HIS DETRACTORS AND MUCH OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK PEOPLE ARE WELL AWARE OF THIS PARADOX. THEREFORE,
- <> THE IMPACT HERE OF <><>GORBACHEVISM<><> IS BEING FELT. BUT ONE SHOULD NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE CAPACITY OF THE <><>HUSAK<><> LEADERSHIP TO DO NOTHING AND STAY IN POWER. IT IS THEIR GREAT TALENT.
- LUERS

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